Moderator Package

Teacher Focus Group

This document is intended to assist AISI teams in facilitating parent focus groups on our 3 themes: Student Engagement, Assessment Practices, and Technology Integration. Additional school-specific questions may be added.

2010

AISI

Chinook's Edge School Division #73

2/19/2010

**Teacher Focus Group**

**Moderator Guide**

1. **INTRODUCTION: (3 min)**

Purpose: The moderator greets the participants and explains the objectives of focus group and reviews the rules.

Instructions:

Hello. I am the moderator for this AISI discussion and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be our note taker. My job is to move the conversation along and make sure that we cover our questions and to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be involved. Our purpose today is to find out what you, as teachers, think about student engagement, student assessment, and technology. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. The purpose is to find out what your personal opinions are, and everyone’s opinion is equally important to us. **We will try to keep our conversation within a one hour time limit.**

Before we get started, here are some ground rules and points of information: [may want to post this and refer to it]

1. Please talk one at a time.
2. Avoid side conversations with neighbors
3. We need to hear from everyone in the course of the discussion, but you don’t have to answer every question.
4. Feel free to respond directly to someone who has made a point. You don’t have to address your comments to me.
5. Say what is true for you and have the courage of your conviction.
6. **We do not use names of students, teachers or parents in discussions.**
7. Respect for opinions: You may find that you disagree with an opinion voiced here by another person. That is OK, and I hope you will say so when that happens in a respectful and polite way. You also may change your mind in the middle of our discussion, perhaps as a result of something that someone else says, and again I hope you will say so, if and when that happens.
8. Don’t hesitate to stop us as we are writing if what we have written does not accurately reflect your comments.
9. This discussion is completely anonymous and confidential. There will be no record of what you say with your name on it. We are not going to quote anyone specifically using her/his name. ***You were all randomly selected to participate in this session, and we appreciate that you have taken time out of your lives to come today.***

Directly quoted from : Abt Associates. (2004). *Principal focus group questions: Moderator guide.* Retrieved February 3, 2010, from <http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf>

1. **TEACHER SELF ASSESSMENT (5-10 minutes)**

**Purpose: Giving participants time to reflect on the three areas on which focus groups questions will be posed. \*\*This can also be done in advance of the focus group to save time.**

* + 1. Provide each participants with a highlighter and a copy of the Teacher Effectiveness Framework (modified version, not entire document)
    2. Teachers self-assess with a highlighter where they believe their current teaching practice resides. **(This is for themselves, you will not collect these)**

1. **Focus Group Questions (see Logistics section below for more detailed information)**
   1. **Assessment Practices (20 min)**
      1. How do **your students** use assessment feedback to improve their learning?
      2. How do **you** use assessment feedback to guide future instruction?
   2. **Student Engagement (20 min)**
      1. What do you see or hear that lets you know your students are engaged in your classroom? [may need to define engagement if your group doesn’t understand – interested, immersed in the work]
      2. Thinking about instructional and assessment practices, what do you do to facilitate such engagement?
   3. **Technology (10-15 min)**
      1. How is technology enhancing student learning and engagement within your subject areas or your classroom? [this may bring out both positive experiences and challenges which may assist in planning]
2. **Wrap-Up** 
   1. We’ve covered a lot of ground in our time together. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about in relation to our 3 topics?
   2. Thank you
   3. May also want to write thank you notes/cards (depending on group)

**Logistics: Teacher Focus Groups**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Think About:** | **Notes to Self:** |
| 1. Where will you hold the focus group? |  |
| 1. When is the most appropriate time for teachers to come in? |  |
| 1. Will you provide snacks? Supper? |  |
| 1. How might these questions be asked?    1. Large group format    2. Grade level or team format    3. Other |  |
| 1. How will you let teachers know about the focus group? |  |
| 1. How will you thank the teachers?    1. Thank you cards    2. Tim Hortons coupons?    3. Other |  |

**Focus Group Process:**

Depending on the size of your staff, the focus group(s) can be run differently.

***Up to 12 people:***

1. Sit at tables so participants can see each other (ideally)
2. Work as a large group with one facilitator and one note taker.
   1. Work through the self reflection and 3 questions as a large group discussion

OR

Follow the post-it-note process or individual sheet process listed below in the “**more than 12 people section**”.

* 1. Note taker should record on chart paper or SMART board or on laptop that is attached to a projector. Notes need to be seen by the group.

1. You may choose to use a tape recorder. Analyzing data from the tape recorder requires you to either analyze the data as you re-listen to the tape OR have the tape transcribed. If you need help with transcriptions, Olds College has an office assistant program that will transcribe your data for a donation to their program. [contact Carmel Maoney at 403-556-4648 or email her at cmaloney@olds college.ca]. **If you choose to use a tape recorder, you should still have someone actively taking notes.**

***More than 12 people:***

1. Sit at tables so participants can see each other. Maximum 6 per table (ideally)
2. Depending on how much time you have as an AISI facilitator, you may wish to gather data from your staff on 2 different days to make the groups smaller.

**OR**

1. You may want to assign a facilitator at each table. Facilitators must understand the goal of the focus group. They keep the conversation running at each table:
   1. You, as the facilitator for the large group, can lead the self-reflection process, then, when ready, turn the 3 questions over to the table facilitator. Your role then will be to wander from table to table to assist with clarification and to assist keeping the conversations focused.
   2. Table facilitators: **Option A – Post-It-Notes** 
      1. Question 1:
         * 1. Have participants write down ideas to questions on post-it-notes first. One idea per post-it-note related to the topic.

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* + - * 1. Each member talks by putting post-it-note in the centre of the table, going around the table group so everyone has a voice. Continue until all post it notes are exhausted.
        2. Table facilitator and group look for similarities of ideas. Group ideas and post on chart paper behind the table.
    1. At the end of the session, table facilitators will need to summarize ideas on the chart paper and expand as needed so when you take poster paper you will understand the notes.
  1. Table facilitators: **Option B – Personal Record Sheets and Chart paper**
     1. Question 1:
        + 1. Table facilitator asks participants to write down initial thoughts on the first topic on a sheet of paper provided to each participant. ***These sheets can be collected by the table facilitator once the conversation has been exhausted.***



* + - * 1. Each member takes a turn sharing ideas from their sheet going around the table group so everyone has a voice. Continue until all ideas are exhausted. Participants may continue to write down ideas on their individual sheets.
        2. Table facilitator either takes notes on chart paper or assigns one of the group members to take notes. Note taker should record on chart paper or on laptop that is attached to a projector. Notes need to be seen by the group.
        3. Table facilitator will need to make sure there is participation from all members.
        4. Upon completion of the first question, go over what has been written, ask if there is anything else that they would like to add.
    1. Go on to second question and repeat process.
  1. Feel free to mix up these strategies after each section.

1. You may choose to use a tape recorder. Analyzing data from the tape recorder requires you to either analyze the data as you re-listen to the tape OR have the tape transcribed. If you need help with transcriptions, Olds College has an office assistant program that will transcribe your data for a donation to their program. [contact Carmel Maloney at 403-556-4648 or email her at cmaloney@olds college.ca]. **If you choose to use a tape recorder, you should still have someone actively taking notes.**

**Materials:**



* Snacks
* Post-it-notes
* Pencils/pens
* Individual participant sheets with focus group questions
* Chart paper
* Markers
* Nametags
* SMART Board or laptop and projector(s) for recording answers– may want to use for small groups

**Tips on Managing the focus Group Session**

* + - 1. Once you present a question to the group, it is important to step back and allow the discussion to progress with only a minimal amount of interruption on your part.
      2. Do not steer the conversation to answers you want to hear ☺
      3. Allow periods of silence. Silence is uncomfortable…but silence is also golden…
      4. Avoid asking questions that seem to suggest a correct answer.
      5. Try not to let strong personalities dominate the discussion.
      6. Encourage input by those who are less inclined to speak out on the questions being discussed.
      7. Make every effort to practice good listening skills.

Directly quoted from: Israel, G., & Galindo-Gonzalez, S. (2008). *Using focus group interviews for planning or evaluating extension programs.* University of Florida.Retrieved February 19, 2010, from <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/PD/PD03600.pdf>



**Analyzing Focus Group Data**

* Analysis is used to indentify overarching themes related to the questions that were discussed and the range of perspectives expressed by the participants.
* Common considerations in analyzing focus group data are:
  + Words: identify commonly used words; cluster similar concepts together; arrange responses on a continuum or in categories. Also consider nonverbal communication related to the words, such as body language and the intensity expressed by the speed, volume, or pitch of speech.
  + Patterns: Do participants change or reverse statement after hearing from each other? What comments were offered by more than one participant? What themes were supported or rejected by more than one participant? What issues or questions were especially easy or difficult for the group to resolve?
  + Specificity of Responses: Give more weight to responses that are specific and based on experiences than those that are vague and impersonal. Give more weight to responses in the first person rather than hypothetical third person.
* Use a several colored highlighters or markers to color code themes in the data.
* Directly quoted from: Tobacco Control Evaluation Center. (n.d.). *Tips & tools #4: Focus Group Interviews*.Retrieved February 19, 2010, from <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5715/27616.pdf>

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**Reporting Focus Group Data**

* Information about the number of people who participated in the focus group and the number of focus groups conducted should be included.
* Key themes in the data should be presented in relation to our 3 themes:
  + Student assessment
  + Student engagement
  + Technology use
* Direct quotes can be used to illustrate the major ideas or perspectives that were identified in the focus group analysis.
* In is usually not appropriate to report the information in terms of the percentage of participants who gave one answer or another. The purpose of the focus is to understand the range of perspectives on the topic of interest.
* Source: Tobacco Control Evaluation Center. (n.d.). *Tips & tools #4: Focus Group Interviews*.Retrieved February 19, 2010, from http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/5715/27616.pdf

**References:**

Abt Associates. (2004). *Principal focus group questions: Moderator guide.* Retrieved February 3, 2010, from <http://www.abt.sliidea.org/dci/principals%20guide.pdf>

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Krueger, R. (n.d.). *Focus group interviewing.* Retrieved February 2, 2010, from <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus.html>

Lee, T. (1999). *Using qualitative methods in organizational research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Appendix A**

**Sample Focus Group form for participants**

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| --- | --- |
| **Theme 1: Student Assessment** |  |
| How do **your students** use assessment feedback to improve their learning? |  |
| How do **you** use assessment feedback to guide future instruction? |  |
| **Theme 2: Student Engagement** |  |
| What do you see or hear that lets you know your students are engaged in your classroom? |  |
| Thinking about instructional and assessment practices, what do you do to facilitate such engagement? |  |
| **Theme 3: Technology Use** |  |
| How is technology enhancing student learning and engagement within your subject areas or your classroom? |  |